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Les poètes du terroir du XV^e siècle au XX^e siècle.

Textes choisis, accompagnés de Notices biographiques et d'une Bibliographie et de cartes des anciens pays de France, par AD. VAN BEVER. (Alsace, Anjou, Auvergne, Béarn, Berry, Bourbonnais, Bourgogne, Bretagne, Champagne.) Tome I. Paris, Delagrave, 1909. xv + 575 pp.

The interest in the literatures of the Provinces of France is growing every day, and the prediction that it would prove a mere fad is farther than ever from being realized. Thus the publication of this admirable volume—which awaits a brother shortly—is very timely. To all those who are familiar with Vicaire's *Études sur la poésie populaire*, the work of Van Bever will be heartily welcome. It is indeed the whole of France, not only the somewhat cosmopolitan Paris which sings all through this rich collection, the gay, sunny France; the variety of the French wit comes out in a really striking fashion; Anjou does not laugh like Béarn, Champagne is not merry like Brittany, Burgundy is enjoying life differently from Alsace. One of the most interesting features are the *Chansons populaires*, generally anonymous, of those various countries. In many cases when the "patois" offers difficulties, a translation is added to the original text. For our own taste, and from the point of view of the scholar, we should have preferred if more space had been allowed to those popular songs, while some of the poets might have been left out without much impairing the value of the book; for instance, such authors who after having gone to Paris lost the characteristic turn of mind of the "terroir" might have been merely mentioned in the introductory chapters. Moreover, such poets like Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Banville, and so forth, are well enough known without being represented there, all the more so as the space allotted to each one of them could not possibly do justice to their importance.

The biographical and bibliographical notes are as generous as they are concise, both for the groups of poets and for the individual men; they will prove extremely valuable for students of French poetry. The name of the editor is a

guarantee by itself of the excellence of the work. Van Bever is one of the greatest "Fureteurs de bibliothèques" in Paris; he is one of the editors of the *Poètes d'aujourd'hui*, that indispensable tool for any student of contemporary poetry in France; and he has now under way a most interesting edition of Guill. Colletet's *Vie des poètes français*, from the unique ms. preserved in the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, and which will be published by H. Champion.¹

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CARLSON, J. S.: *Swedish Grammar and Reader*. The H. W. Wilson Company, Minneapolis. 1907. Pp. 277.

Carlson's *Grammar*, based, as the author informs us in his Preface, on Sundén's *Svensk Språklära*, is intended "as a practical text-book for the school-room and home." In eighty-six pages the principles of Swedish grammar are presented and in twenty more a survey of the syntax. Pages 107-126 contain Exercises 1) illustrating the various parts of the sentence and grammatical forms in general and, 2) exemplifying the spelling of Swedish, especially the various ways in which the *j*-, *v*-, *sje*-, *tje*-, and *äng*-sounds are indicated in writing. The remainder, or a little over one-half of the book, is given to the selections for reading, and the vocabulary to these (pages 227-273). The latter seems to have been carefully prepared; I have found few omissions either of words used in the texts or of meanings in which these are used. There is, however, a considerable sprinkling of misprints, some of which will be confusing enough to the beginner, as p. 264, *ställe*, n. 5; should be n. 4 (neuter, class 4), and p. 253, *minne*, n. 3, which also should be n. 4.¹ I believe, too, that it would have been better in such a grammar if each separate word had been set apart as are the primary stems, and not to embody derivatives and com-

¹ For a more complete description of this forthcoming Colletet and the conditions for subscription, see my note in *Library Journal*, March, 1909, pp. 140-1.

¹ Misprints are unfortunately rather numerous in the *Grammar*.

pounds in the article under the stem. The selections of the *Reader* are, in general, excellent; from among the poets, Wallin, Nicander, Anna Maria Lenngren, Grafström, Strandberg, Runenberg, Geiger, Vitalis, Sehlstedt and Lindblad are represented by one or more selections each, while in prose the numbers are from Topelius, Hjärne, Fredrika Bremer, G. af Geigerstrom, Victor Rydberg, Melander, Tegnér, Geijer, Hedenstjerna, Starbäck, Fryxell, and Mellin.²

The grammar proper will be found to be very serviceable; being written by one to the manner born the explanations of sounds and the discussions of rules and forms are almost always correct and the matter is presented in both readable and teachable form. Some antiquated terms occur in the phonology, which the teacher would best correct to those in present usage; especially objectionable is the designation of *v*, *f*, *s*, *sj*, *tj* and *j* all as 'sibilants.' On page 2, the sound of *ä* is correctly given as that of *ea* in 'bear,' but incorrectly as also that of *a* in 'make'; in § 12 it would have been to the point to have stated that *c* is extremely rare in native Swedish words, occurring only along with *k* or *h* (in *ach*); it would have aided the student if under 48, *c*, the fact of existing cognates in *a* had been brought out. It is an error, I think, to give under 47, 2, *d*, this practically complete list of words in which the short sound of *a* is written *o*, and similarly under 47, 2, *e*, in the case of foreign words in which *a* is written *o*; only a few commonly used words should have been given. Likewise it certainly is confusing to the student to have given at all the rules, § 66, for the old three genders, when present Swedish no longer recognizes that, but is a four gender language, something which is correctly presented elsewhere in the grammar. But I do not wish to seem to find fault, for the good points of Carlson's *Grammar* are many. I regard it as a distinct addition to our helps for the study of Swedish in this country and the book ought to become widely used.

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²Some selections from the most recent Swedish writers should have been included, especially one to illustrate the remarkable prose of Selma Lagerlöf.

CORRESPONDENCE.

GUMMERE'S *Oldest English Epic*.

To the Editors of *Mod. Lang. Notes*.

SIRS:—I am one of many who have been welcoming Mr. Gummere's *The Oldest English Epic*, just published. To me, the translation of *Beowulf* it contains, in verse, is of special interest. Can you spare me space for a word or two regarding Mr. Gummere's reasons for preferring verse to prose? These reasons he gives, but says nothing of the other side of the question. He objects to a prose translation because the original is in verse, and because in a prose translation one "can" (does this mean one must inevitably?) get rid of the style of the original, or "suppress it to the vanishing point." These reasons we may leave as stated, and turn to Mr. Gummere's arraignment of a belief, indefensible in his opinion, which he no doubt considers characteristic of those perverse enough to prefer a prose translation. "No greater mistake," he says, "exists than to suppose that the rhythm and style of these early English poems cannot be rendered adequately in modern English speech."

The word to be noted here is "adequately"; the whole question turns on that. Mr. Gummere continues, "As a practical problem *solvitur ambulando*." He probably refers to the pedestrian muse. Who will deny that a person even of modest attainments can sit down and forthwith translate Old English verse with every faithful intention into an imitation of it that scans—or even write original poems in it like Hall's *Old English Idyls*. In point of fact, the embracing of such a temptation and the actual transgression are alike only too fatally easy. At moments—all too few and fleeting—such a translator can be what, by courtesy, is called 'felicitous.' But "adequate" his translation will not be, either as regards rhythm or something still more vital, accuracy, for two main reasons. In the first place, because Modern "Old English" verse does not sound in the least like real Old English verse. It is a bastard archeological fabrication, or an atavistic degenerate, or—something else; and it never will be anything else unless, through some miracle, it should be human-